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MORE EFFICIENT CITIZENSHIP

STATEMENT

OF

WILSON L. GILL, LL. B.

IN RELATION TO MORE EFFICIENT CITIZENSHIP, THROUGH DIRECT TRAINING FOR IT IN THE SCHOOLS

AND IN SUPPORT OF

AN AMENDMENT INTENDED TO BE PROPOSED BY MR. OWEN TO THE BILL (H. R. 19909) MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE LEGISLATIVE, EXECUTIVE, AND JUDICIAL EXPENSES OF THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 1916 AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

PRESENTED BY MR. OWEN

DECEMBER 22, 1914.—Ordered to be printed

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[Amendment intended to be proposed by Mr. Owen to the bill (H. R. 19909) making appropriations for the legislative, executive, and judicial expenses of the Government for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1916, and for other purposes: Insert the following: "For investigation and promotion of efficient instruction in citizenship, including personal services in the District of Columbia and elsewhere, $25,000."]

A STATEMENT BY WILSON L. GILL, LL. B.

AMERICAN PATRIOTIC LEAGUE.

Incorporated under law of Congress, 1891.

TO PROMOTE MORAL AND CIVIC TRAINING IN ALL SCHOOLS.

Independence Hall, Philadelphia, Pa., U. S. A.

[Wilson L. Gill, president, 501 West Mount Pleasant Avenue, Mount Airy, Pa. Lyman Beecher Stowe, secretary. H. M. Hill, financial secretary. Council: Ernest K. Coulter, New York; Admiral George Dewey, U. S. Navy; President Wm. H. P. Faunce, Brown University; Dean Geo. W. Kirchwey, LL. D., Columbia University; Judge Ben. B. Lindsey, Colorado; Hon. Levi P. Morton, New York; Hon. Gifford Pinchot, Pennsylvania; Rev. Thomas R. Slicer, New York; Josiah Strong, D. D., New York; Maj. Gen. Leonard Wood, U. S. Army. School republic committee: Ludwig B. Bernstein, Thomas S. Crane, Frederic R. Kellogg (chairman), Geo. W. Kirchwey, Henry M. Leipziger, Daniel T. Pierce, Luis Muñoz Rivera, Wm. Ives Washburn, Judge E. B. Wilcox.]

DECEMBER 9, 1914.

Hon. ROBERT L. OWEN,
Washington, D. C.

MY DEAR SIR: I have seen with great interest and respect, that you have been willing to recognize the value and importance of expert work, and to use it for the good of the people. This encourages me to believe that you will gladly recognize certain expert work in a direction quite as vital to the welfare of the whole people as any thing that has ever come for the consideration of the United States Congress.

I refer to the matter of vastly improving the efficiency of citizenship throughout the United States. It is generally supposed that the public schools, colleges and universities are actually attending to this. It is for this, primarily, that they exist. It will not be denied that they educate the individual in various ways and give him a considerable fund of information. But the primary object is not gained. It is a notorious fact that as a whole, with few exceptions, college men will not, if they can avoid it, serve on juries, and they will not attend primary meetings or vote at local elections. In the lower walks of life the situation is more serious.

As a student in social and political science I investigated this matter, discovered the roots of the evil, saw the necessary and only possible remedy, and put it to a test with 1,100 school children in New York City, with entirely satisfactory results. For the United

States War Department I made the application with greatest satisfaction to the department in more than 3,600 schoolrooms in Cuba. For the Bureau of Indian Affairs, I began the same work in the Indian schools, and the United States Commissioner of Education is applying it in all the Government schools in Alaska. The method is used in many schools throughout the United States, in some orphan asylums and reform schools, and in some schools in many countries. It is estimated that about 100,000 children in New York City are receiving this kind of instruction.

The children of a schoolroom are made citizens of a republic, which may have the form of a village, town, county, city, or other form. This little republic, without detracting from the teacher's authority, is given legislative, executive, and judicial power. The children are made to understand that there can be no thoroughly successful citizenship except that it is based on the practice of the golden rule, which must be interpreted as meaning not only that they must be honest, just and kind, but also clean in every respect, including their language, conduct and thoughts. They legislate in relation to their own conduct, and elect officers at short intervals to enforce their laws and others to adjudicate difficulties. The organization is exceedingly simple, with only three officers, or more developed, according to circumstances. Several school-room republics may be joined in a State, and several States in a national government.

I think the Government ought to foster this work systematically, rather than piecemeal as in the past. The United States Commissioner of Education believes this can be done through his office, with an appropriation of $12,500. This would be a good though rather parsimonious beginning, and I submit his suggestion, for an amendment of the appropriation bill, as follows: "For investigation and promotion of efficiency, instruction and training in citizenship, including personal services in the District of Columbia and elsewhere, $12,500." The intention is to expend this as follows: Salary of specialist, $4,500; assistant, $2,500; clerk, $1,500; traveling and other expenses, $4,000. As the Government has made so large a test, it seems to me that it is fully justified in taking hold of this matter on this or almost any scale.

It seems to me that the vastness of the importance of this matter is such that, following the precedent of the Children's Bureau, it should be handled by a separate bureau. In that case I should hope that the appropriation would be for as much as $25,000, providing for several more workers, as the field is very large, including schools in the United States, Porto Rico, Philippines, Indian, and other Government schools, and, as a matter of international comity and defense, the schools of other countries when we are invited to assist, as I have been personally by school and government officials of six American Republics, six European countries, four Asiatic, and several British colonies in various parts of the world.

Should these ideas have your approval, I hope you will care to secure the printing of the accompanying paper as a Senate document, and, if you think best, this letter as a preface.

Very truly, yours,

WILSON L. GILL.

MORE EFFICIENT CITIZENSHIP THROUGH DIRECT TRAINING FOR IT IN THE SCHOOLS.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America:

"In the present crisis in the struggle between the people and powerful special privilege the training and education of the people in self-government is an essential and a necessary foundation of their success."

Through the school-republic system, in successful use for the past 17 years, children are accorded self-government under instruction. The appeal, when properly made, to children in the kindergarten or students in college to take up their citizenship is certain to be met with a hearty response, since practically all normal children have a large latent desire for justice always ready to be called into activity. They gladly assume responsibility for their own conduct. They will not permit bullying, hazing, truancy, the defacement or destruction of public or private property, dropping fruit skins or spitting on sidewalks, littering the streets, marking up houses and fences with chalk, or other offenses against public and private rights and property. They develop their own sense of justice and independence of thought and action, and both initiative and cooperation for every good purpose. High-school children understand these matters easily and kindergarten children thoroughly understand some of them.

In 1897 I worked out this problem in a New York City public school. Since then the United States, through several of its departments and bureaus, has used this democratic method to produce a better spirit and greater economy and efficiency in all school work and to develop better moral and civic conditions. The official reports published by the Government testify to the most satisfactory results.

The man who has had the largest official experience with this method is Maj. Gen. Leonard Wood. On him rested the responsibility of cleaning Cuba, driving out the mosquitoes and yellow fever, and thus protecting the people of our Southern States from the annual threat of a yellow-fever epidemic, which always came from Cuban ports; of giving to the people who had been fighting half a century for freedom a better citizenship than that which has been so much in evidence in Mexico and Central America, which would keep the island clean and free from periodical armed revolutions.

He could not get at the grown people directly to instruct them for these purposes, but he could indirectly, through the children. He engaged me, the originator of the school-republic method, to organize every public school in Cuba (more than 3,600 schoolrooms) as republics, in which the pupils became citizens. The children made laws for their own conduct in the school, the street, their homes,

everywhere. They elected executive and judicial officers. They learned that perfect citizenship must be based on the practice of the golden rule, and that must be interpreted as meaning they must be honest, just, and kind to every person, everywhere; and that they must be clean in every respect—bodies, clothing, homes, streets, language, and thoughts.

As the children in the slums of New York helped Col. Waring clean the city, so the children from one end of Cuba to the other, with the greatest enthusiasm, helped Gen. Wood clean their island. The parents caught the chidren's enthusiasm, and the dirt, mosquitoes, and yellow fever disappeared as if by magic.

This spirit of active citizenship enables the children to more fully appreciate the purpose and value of their school and to cooperate for better conditions. When these results are secured, they are accompanied by greater interest in the school and in the community on the part of the pupils, greater economy in the vital force of both teachers and children, and greater efficiency in every direction.

A schoolroom is the unit of organization. The little republic may have the form of a village, town, county, or city. A brief charter of directions is furnished the teacher and pupils. When properly presented to the pupils they adopt it as their own, unanimously and heartily, they gladly accept the responsibilities under it, and they loyally support the officers whom they have elected to execute the laws and settle difficulties. It provides for a mayor or other chief magistrate, a judge and an officer to preside at the meetings of the legislative body, which is composed of all the pupils. These three officers are all that are necessary, but it is provided that they may have others, such as a clerk for each of the three divisions of government, officers of the peace, health, cleanliness, public works, games, librarian, and any others for whom special duties may be found. The commission form of government is used in some schools. The elections are of great educational value and are frequent.

The teacher does not become a citizen of the little republic any more than he would become a member of the class in reading. He is teacher in this as in other school work, but as he helps the children to become independent in solving the problems of arithmetic, so he helps them to become independent as soon as possible in solving the problems of their daily life, and in both cases is always on hand to point out errors and to help them follow the right course.

There is generally a meeting of the legislative body once a week. This takes 15 minutes, more or less, according to circumstances. If time is provided in the curriculum for moral or civic teaching, the functions of government are attended to in this time. The responsibilities of citizenship are continuous, as in the case of grown people.

The charter given in A New Citizenship, which I have written to give the history, philosophy, and application of the school-republic method, contains the following brief code of—

LAWS OF PERSONAL CONDUCT.

CHAPTER I.—*The General Law.*

SECTION 1. Do good to others, whatever they do to you. This natural law, without which no popular government can succeed, is the general law to which all other laws and regulations must conform.

CHAPTER II.—*Things Prohibited.*

SECTION 1. Do no wrong to anyone.

ORDER.

SEC. 2. Anything which disturbs the order in halls, classrooms, or in any place within the jurisdiction of this government, is prohibited.

SEC. 3. Anything which is profane, rude, immodest, impure, impolite, or unkind to any living creature is prohibited.

CLEANLINESS.

SEC. 4. Anything which detracts from the neat and orderly appearance of our community is prohibited.

HEALTH.

SEC. 5. Anything which detracts from the healthful condition of our community is prohibited.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROPERTY.

SEC. 6. Anything which mars or destroys property is prohibited.

CHAPTER III.—*Duties.*

SECTION 1. It is the duty of all citizens to be loyal, obedient, and faithful to every branch of their Government, from that of the United States of America and their own State, to their own school republic, and to all lawful authority; to endeavor to make good laws and to observe them; to use their best judgment in choosing officers; when chosen to any office, to accept the responsibility and to perform the duties thereof to the best of their ability; to encourage and help their officers without reference to the way their individual votes have been cast; when summoned to appear in court, to comply and give every reasonable assistance to enable the judge to discover the truth and to arrive at a just decision, whatever their relation may be to the case; to abide by the judgment of the court, when approved by the teacher or principal of the school; to perform faithfully and to the best of their ability all the duties of citizenship; and in all affairs to observe the golden rule.

CHAPTER IV.—*Punishment.*

SECTION 1. Any citizen violating any law of this government shall be subject to punishment not less than a reprimand and not greater than the withdrawal of the rights of citizenship.

SEC. 2. No punishment shall be carried into execution before it has been approved by the teacher or principal of the school, and then it must be put into effect promptly.

The method of applying these principles is very simple and requires no more skill or tact than to teach any other branch, but it does require as much attention and enthusiasm on the part of the teacher as is necessary to make a success of any other school work. This is not unsupported theory. It is knowledge gained through 17 years' experience with the method. This experience warrants the further statement that some teachers who have found it difficult or impossible to maintain order in the school by the ordinary method of compulsion find no difficulty in doing so by this method. Not every teacher, but teachers in general, occasionally need advice and encouragement by a supervisor who is skilled in this work.

Academic teaching by patriotic songs, salute to the flag, recitations from books on civics and history, lectures, etc., are all good, but they are not enough. To the academic must be added the laboratory method, which is such constant, systematic practice under instruction of that which is right as will result in fixed habits of honesty, justice, kindness, independence, and cooperation for every

good purpose. The academic is old, the laboratory is new and distinct, and is needed to vitalize the academic, which it does splendidly, but that the whole people may have the benefit of it, it must be provided for in the curriculum by national, State, and local legislation.

The growth of civilization by the ordinary means of evolution is very slow. The introduction of any improvement in methods has been a matter of centuries. The appeal for improvement has been made to adults, whose habits of thought and action have been established in childhood, before any conclusive appeal came to them. It is difficult for any person and impracticable for most to change any habit.

It is a comparatively easy matter to guide a little child to make good habits for his whole life. It is but recently that there has been any adequate means for reaching children in general for this purpose. The public schools, rapidly extending in our own and other countries, are adequate means. There has been no efficient method for their use till now, but the school republic or democratic method is both economic and efficient for this purpose, and adds greatly to the total happiness of the children's daily life.

It is constructive of right as well as destructive of wrong, for it begins early in child life before the habits have been established, and when properly used, tends to fill the child's waking hours so full of valuable thoughts and activities, that there is but little room in which weeds may grow. It is not merely reformatory. For instance, it prevents his forming the habit of dropping fruit skins on the sidewalk, which frequently cause serious accidents to men and women; of dropping any kind of litter in the streets; of taking chalk from the blackboard and marking up houses, fences, lamp-posts, etc.; of using bad words; of quarreling and fighting; of throwing stones at birds, animals, windows, and at each other; and of other annoying things which the teacher can not reach, but which are both social and civic wrongs. All of these things and many more are fully within the comprehension of 4-year-old kindergarten children. By this method of democracy, children easily, gladly, and effectually prevent wrongs which ordinarily develop in the grammar grades, such as profanity and vulgar language; cigarette smoking; writing, drawing, and circulating improper notes and pictures; and such things as result in more serious wrongs in high schools.

The following testimony is conclusive as to the social and political importance of this form of democracy as an educational force in the schools:

In 1913 Maj. Gen. Leonard Wood wrote the following concerning his experience with the school republic in Cuba:

> The results were most satisfactory; indeed they were so satisfactory that I unhesitatingly commend the idea as worthy of the most serious consideration. The results were far-reaching and valuable, and are fully set forth in my various reports as military governor of Cuba and the reports of the officials at the head of the public-school system of the island.
>
> This system would, I believe, be especially valuable in all schools, and would result in our children being much better equipped for the discharge of their civic responsibilities.

April 15, 1914, Gen. Wood wrote the chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs:

I am confident it is a system well worth trying out in our insular possessions, teaching as it does discipline and being founded on a habitual submission to the majority, a mental condition which is absolutely essential to the establishment of any form of self-government.

On the same day (April 15) Gen. Wood said to a group of officers of the General Staff:

If Mexico had had the school republic in all her schools for 10 years, as we have had it for two years in Cuba, the present troubles would never have arisen.

Judge Ben B. Lindsey, than whom there is no higher authority in such matters, says:

I am one of those in a peculiar position to appreciate the value of the school republic. When this idea is properly presented and applied it at once becomes a wonderful contribution to good citizenship. I do not know a better wish that I could make for our children than to wish A New Citizenship the widest possible circulation.

Walter C. Shields, superintendent for the Department of the Interior of the northwest district of Alaska, wrote at Nome, October 27, 1913:

This winter I expect to see the school republic in operation in all the schools in the district. I wish you could see how splendidly it is adapted to our needs here.

The following is an extract from the official report received by the United States Commissioner of Education November 30, 1914, from Wainwright, on the Arctic coast of Alaska:

The school republic has done wonders for these scholars. They grew by leaps and bounds in self-confidence and overcame their false timidity and fear of being heard. Every Friday afternoon meeting was an improvement on the preceding one, until they would conduct their meetings in parliamentary order without my assistance. They made and executed their own laws, elected their own officers for a period of one month, salaried and paid them weekly. At first they had to be told every move to make and were afraid to speak in an audible tone, but by patient effort such difficulties were overcome.

I append the following rules and penalties, officers and their duties, etc., which will give you a general idea of our working basis. These could be profitably commented upon. Now, this, simple as it may seem, has accomplished wonders in this school this year in many ways. Industry, cleanliness, economy, good deportment, self-reliance, punctuality, neatness, obedience, appreciation, honesty, truthfulness, kindness, and kindred admirable traits have come to the front. In fact, it has straightened matters out in general. We don't see how we could well have gotten along without it.

In the commissioner's report on Alaska, just printed (Dec., 1914), appears, on page 36, the following:

District Superintendent W. C. Shields sent a pamphlet on self-government, by Wilson L. Gill, and said: "Adopt this for use and report your success." It was adopted. * * * Self-government had to be employed as a detail in school management. * * * The duties which the citizens were elected to perform were sufficiently numerous for each citizen to have a duty. * * * It was amusing to see a stubby little 12-year-old police officer bring to school a man-grown truant. The schoolroom was kept open from 9 a. m. till 8 p. m. every day; when school was not in session the schoolroom served as a sort of clubroom. One or more of the police officers was always present, and the room was always orderly. Citizens might read, write, sew, play games, or do whatever they liked, but they must never be idle.

The school republic seems to be the problem of school management solving itself. It increases school efficiency, adds enthusiasm, and answers the teacher's question, How shall I do without an assistant?

On page 38 of same report another teacher writes:

The innovation was of material assistance to the teacher.

Another teacher reports, on page 47:

The children like this new organization very much, indeed.

Louis P. Nash, head master of a Boston school district, made the following statement, after 13 years' use of this method:

> My experience and observation of the school republic is that it is altogether useful and not at all harmful. Its intellectual advantages are many. Its moral advantages are more considerable.

David Snedden, Massachusetts commissioner of education, has written:

> The miniature school community becomes a miniature state, and the children learn to appreciate self-made laws and to contribute to their enforcement. I am profoundly convinced of the rightness of these ideas, and of the fact that they are in line with the best sociological thinking of our time.

A more strict, earnest, and heartily responsive discipline may be maintained in every school, shop and Army and Navy organization by means of democracy in the ranks than by the authority alone of teachers, foremen and officers. This democracy properly introduced and supervised, will uphold and strengthen the authority of and the respect for teachers, foremen and officers.

It works for economy as well as efficiency in every direction. It is inexpensive. It does not call for buildings, apparatus, clothing, food, or teachers, but only a change of methods, from the ancient monarchical tyranny to the modern democracy; but at the same time, as I have said, it does not weaken, but it strengthens and enforces the authority of teachers and officers.

Universal and permanent peace, internal as well as international, can be hastened by democracy in all schools.

This can be used to excellent advantage to increase efficiency and improve the *esprit de corps* at West Point, Annapolis, Newport, in all Indian and other Government schools, in all public and private schools, in all reform schools and prisons, and among the enlisted men in the Army and Navy; and efficiency in American citizenship demands it in every school for young people and in all colleges and universities.

It is needed in the schools of the District of Columbia, in justice to the children, and as an example to the schools of the United States, and to all foreign diplomats resident in Washington. It needs a few men of large caliber and the right kind of experience, supported by clerical assistance and printed matter, to attend to the needs of our Nation in this matter of training in democracy, and these men should have enough common sense, gentility, and tact to get the attention, the interest, and the enthusiastic cooperation of foreign diplomats. Such men can not be found by the dozen, at $2,500 each, but there are a few such men who can be enlisted at very small cost as compared with that of men of similar fitness in the professions and in commercial business.

An appropriation of $12,500, to be expended by a commissioner of citizenship, connected possibly with the Department of State, or by the Commissioner of Education, could accomplish a very important work. Double this amount would multiply the good results by at least four, and maybe a great deal more. A still larger sum could be used to splendid advantage.

While teachers and all school authorities should be encouraged by every means to adopt this method independently, and the work must be accomplished through the schools, no one ought to allow

himself to be blinded by these facts to the immensely important fact that this is not an educational detail to be settled by school men. They will do their part gladly, when directed to do so by competent authority. This is primarily a matter of public policy and of statesmanship that must be provided for by the United States Congress and the State legislatures. It is fundamental and it is vital to the highest welfare of this Nation and of every other nation on earth.

WILSON L. GILL.

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